
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 271

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LABOR DEPARTMENT.

SUMMARY

This bill makes various unrelated changes to the labor statutes.

It standardizes the definition of “health care provider” used in the unemployment statutes. In doing so, it expands the range of occupations that may provide documentation or diagnoses to qualify certain claimants for unemployment benefits (e.g., when they can only work part-time due to a physical or mental impairment).

The bill also allows the labor commissioner, or her duly authorized agent, to negotiate and compromise with reimbursing employers who owe payments to the unemployment system if there is doubt about the employer’s liability for, or the collectability of, the amount in question. Existing law already allows the commissioner to do this for employers who contribute to the state unemployment fund through unemployment taxes. Generally, reimbursing employers are those, like the state and municipalities, who directly reimburse the unemployment fund for benefits paid to former employees, rather than paying unemployment taxes (§ 3).

Existing law generally prohibits employers from firing employees in commercial occupations or industrial process work for refusing to work more than six days in a calendar week. The bill transfers responsibility for receiving and deciding employee complaints over these violations from the State Board of Mediation and Arbitration to the labor commissioner or her designee. It also (1) removes a mandatory fine of up to \$200 and (2) allows parties aggrieved by a labor commissioner’s decision to appeal to Superior Court under the Uniform Administrative Procedure Act (§ 4).

Lastly, the bill eliminates the Employment Security Advisory Board and makes conforming changes (§§ 5-8). Under current law, the board advises the labor commissioner about the policy and operations of the Employment Security Division, which administers the unemployment benefit system.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026, except that certain changes conforming to the repeal of the Employment Security Advisory Board (§§ 5-7) take effect July 1, 2026.

§§ 1 & 2 — “HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS”

State unemployment law generally allows claimants for unemployment benefits to collect benefits if they voluntarily left employment to care for their spouse, child, or parent with an illness or disability diagnosed by a “health provider.” Under current law, these providers include:

1. allopathic or osteopathic physicians;
2. podiatrists, dentists, psychologists, optometrists, or chiropractors;
3. advanced practice registered nurses, nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, or clinical social workers;
4. Christian Science practitioners listed with the First Church of Christ, Scientist in Boston, Massachusetts;
5. any medical practitioner from whom an employer or a group health plan’s benefits manager will accept certification to substantiate a claim for benefits;
6. licensed medical practitioners in a profession listed above who practice in a different country; and
7. other health care providers approved by the labor commissioner.

The bill adds physician assistants (PAs) to this list of providers.

The law also allows unemployment claimants to limit their availability for work to part-time employment if they can provide documentation that they have a chronic, long-term, or permanent physical or mental impairment that prevents them from working full-time. Current law requires that this documentation be from a licensed physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse. The bill instead requires it to be from the broader range of “health care providers” described above.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Labor and Public Employees Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 13 Nay 0 (03/05/2026)